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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 6338

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAGR, OVIP, VE
SUBJECT: SECRETARY BUTZ'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PEREZ

1. SUMMARY: SECRETARY BUTZ, IN HIS MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, DIFFERED USG BILATERAL COLLABORATION IN VENEZUELA'S AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. PEREZ REACTED IN AN APPARENTLY POSITIVE FASHION AND GENERALLY REFLECTED AN INTENSE INTEREST IN AND COMMITMENT TO THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. HE RECALLED ONCE AGAIN WITH WARM APPROVAL SECRETARY KISSINGER'S PROPOSALS IN THE HOUSTON SPEECH FOR HEMISPHERIC AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION. THE MEETING PROVIDED A HIGHLY USEFUL OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS GOV ATTENTION ON THE PROSPECTIVE PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF A CLOSER BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY

2. SECREARY BUTZ, ACCOMPANIED BY THE AMBASSADOR AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE CARMELO CONTRERAS, CALLED ON PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ JUNE 18 AT MIRAFLORES. THE MEETING LASTED APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES AND WAS EXTREMELY CORDIAL THROUGHOUT.

3. SECRETARY BUTZ TOOK THE OCCASION TO EMPHASIZE THE ADMINISTRATION'S SUPPORT OF THE GREEN AMENDMENT TO THE TRADE REFORM ACT AND THE USG'S RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT VENEZUELA DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ARAB EMBARGO. HE ALSO STRESSED OUR DESIRE FOR CLOSER BILATERAL COOPERATION IN AGRICULTURE AND OFFERED HIS DEPARTMENT'S BEST EFFORTS TO ASSIST VENEZUELAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.
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4. PEREZ SAID THE GOV IS "OPTIMISTIC" WITH RESPECT TO THE GREEN AMENDMENT AND HOPES WE REALIZE THAT THE GOV DID NOT AND DOES NOT SHARE ARAB "IDEOLOGY." HE REFERRED TO THE "SYSTEMATIC CAMPAIGN OF HATE" AGAINST THE UNITED STATES CARRIED OUT BY THE EXTREME LEFT IN LATIN AMERICA AND REGRETTED THAT IN A FEW INSTANCES U.S. ACTIONS AND THE LEGITIMATE COMPLAINTS THEY HAVE PRODUCED IN LATIN AMERICA SEEMED TO REINFORCE THAT CAMPAIGN.

5. THE PRESIDENT RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO THE SUGGESTION THAT CLOSER BILATERAL COOPERATION IN AGRICULTURE WOULD BE BENEFICIAL. HE SAID VENEZUELA HAS SPECIFIC NEEDS IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT THAT BILATERAL COLLABORATION COULD USEFULLY SERVE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE THOUGHT THAT AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH--AND PARTICULARLY RESEARCH IN TROPICAL AGRICULTURAL--IS THE MOST PRESSING NEED, AND THAT A MULTILATERAL APPROACH IS REQUIRED HERE. PEREZ SAID HE WAS DISSATISFIED WITH THE WORK OF THE INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES IN SAN JOSE AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE A NEW AND MORE PACTICAL INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH.

6. HE RECALLED SECRETARY KISSINGER'S PROPOSALS IN THE HOUSTON SPEECH FOR INTENSIFIED HEMISPHERIC AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION AND CALLED THEM THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OFFER OF US ASSISTANCE TO LATIN AMERICA IN MANY YEARS. PEREZ SAID: "ALL WE ASK IS THAT YOU HELP US TO HELP OURSELVES."

7. THE PRESIDENT WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED TO RECEIVE FROM SECRETARY BUTZ PRESIDENT FORD'S PERSONAL LETTER. HE SAID IT WAS GRATIFYING TO HAVE SECRETARY BUTZ IN VENEZUELA, BOTH AS A MEMBER OF PRESIDENT FORD'S CABINET AND AS SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE--A FIELD OF PRIMARY CONCERN TO HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT.

8. COMMENT: PEREZ PROJECTED AN INTENSE, ALMOST BURNING INTEREST IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND HIS CUSTOMARY IMPATIENCE TO GET ON WITH THE JOB. MINISTER CONTRERAS COMMENTED LATER THAT THIS INTEREST IS POLITICAL AS WELL AS DEVELOPMENTAL SINCE THE PRESIDENT BELIEVES VENEZUELA'S RETARDED RURAL SECTOR TO BE THE COUNTRY'S SOFT SPOT AND RIPE FOR POLITICAL EXPLOITATION.

9. WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY THE STRONGLY POSITIVE REACTION
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HERE TO THE SECRETARY'S HOUSTON PROPOSALS ON AGRICULTURE. WE HOPE A PROGRESS REPORT WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON TO SERVE AS A BASIS FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH THE GOV. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ MOST PROBABLY HAS CARACAS IN MIND AS THE SEAT OF THE NEW CENTER FOR THE EXCHANGE OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INFORMATION.

10. SECRETARY BUTZ TOOK FULL AND SKILLFUL ADVANTAGE OF THE

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MEETING TO FOCUS GOV ATTENTION ON THE PROSPECTIVE PRACTICAL
ADVANTAGES FOR VENEZUELAN DEVELOPMENT IN AN INTENSIFIED BILATERAL
RELATIONSHIP. MINISTER CONTRERAS, AT LEAST, REACTED ENTHUSI-
ASTICALLY TO THAT MESSAGE, AS WAS APPARENT IN HIS SESSION THE
NEXT DAY WITH SECRETARY BUTZ. WE ARE REPORTING SEPARATELY
ON THAT MEETING.
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